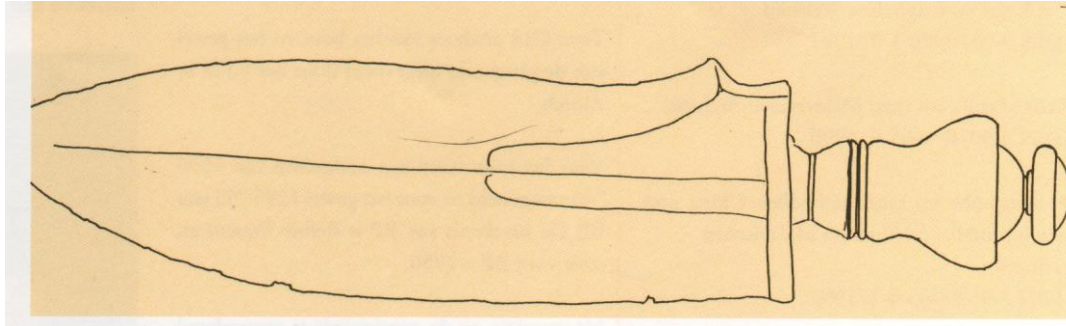


Keris Buda Voglsinger by M. Kerner

Translated in Dutch by J. van As. Translated from Dutch to English by G. Giesen.



Origin:

The Keris is owned by mr. M. Voglsinger, who bought it in the summer of 1999 in Zurich. The seller is well known by the author and said to have purchased the keris in Malang (East Java).

The condition of the keris is exceptionally good. The front side is covered with a dark, thin layer with small drop shaped elevations. But such that the outer shape or the structure of the surface is not being disturbed. The condition of the backside is similar but here there are more layers present in the shape of a fine grained sand that is backed to the surface. Under specific lighting circumstances you can see mirrorlike planes in those layers made out of sparkling crystals. The metuk and the bodem part of the grip is only covered with this sand for a small part.

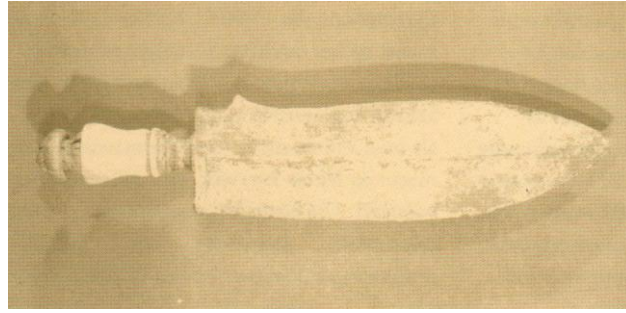
The sand is very presumably of volcanic origin. Because only one side of the Keris is covered with this volcanic sand it is obvious that the keris was covered by a volcanic rain of ashes. At which one can determine that the keris was not in its sheath at that moment. Probably the ash rain was hot and aggressive enough to make a permanent, protective layer of rust but not hot enough to burn the hilt, which consists of organic material. The temperature and the gasses from the ashes possibly contributed to the conservation of the organic material. Since the ash residue can be found on all the parts of this keris it is to assume that it is still fully original.

The Blade:

The shape of the blade is:

Length (without the ganja) 20,6 cm. Width in the middle 6,2 cm. Slenderness S 1,66.

SxL 34,22 cm.



The blade is short and wide and so its place in the S – SxL diagram of the keris buda is at the bottom end of the regression curve, near the bronze dagger from the Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (KIT) (Royal Institute for the Tropics), Amsterdam and the Chinese Bishou from the Dong-Son culture. This can be seen as proof for the transition from bronze dagger to iron keris. The blade is forged out thin and has a raised spine in the middle all along its length and there are about 8 cm long sogokan. The edges are carefully forged. The shape of the gandik is unknown. The gandik looks like short (about 1 cm) protruding nose which makes a flowing line with the blade. On the other side the asymmetrical transition to the ganja is missing. The ganja has a wide head and the width of the middle part is adjusted to the cross section of the metuk, the tail is missing entirely.

The blade is forged excellently and has all the characteristics of a keris, with exception of the pamor. The ganja also shows no pamor. The surface of the blade was originally probably smooth and does not show any signs of etching. The metuk has the shape of a hourglass with a double rill in the middle and a closing plate on the side of the handle. The peksi is square.

The Hilt

The hilt is made out of two organic materials. A cylinder shaped ebony plug that ends in a big button. And a bulky piece of hollow bone or antler, that fits over the cylinder of the plug and that has two rills at the base. All pieces of the hilt are made with a lathe. This is not very surprising since lathes are known in China as early as two millennia B.C., they were used in working Jade.

The way both parts of the hilt were made, gives the impression that they tried to duplicate the hilt of a bronze dagger in detail. The hat of the mushroom-shaped button is undercut and has a thickened edge with above it a lens-shaped end. The base of the hilt has the same diameter as the metuk. For this adjustment they even accepted a partial break-through of the wall of the bone.

The grip was glued to the peksi with an organic binding agent. This agent is mineralized and has gotten a grey color. The wooden part shows ripping from age and dehydration. After the current owner got the keris the bone hilt is snapped in two due to climate change.



Resume

It is an extraordinary lucky coincidence that a keris like this is excavated. The keris is in very good shape, with practically no damage by rust formation and still got its original hilt from organic material. The shape of the blade indicates a direct relationship with the bronze daggers as they are known from temple sculptures and musea. The organic material from the hilt allows us the possibility to determine the age by means of a C14 method. So this can be the first step for dating the Buda keris.

Below a supplement to the article by M. Kerner about the Voglsinger Keris. As a result of a recently conducted C14 test on the organic material of the hilt from this keris.

Labor Nr.	Proben Nr.	AMS-C14		kalib. Alter [BC/AD]
		Alter [(BP]	*13C [0/00]	
ETH-21823 (100.0 %)	WOOD	1'090 " 40	-29.2 " 1.1	AD 889 – 1016
ETH-21824 (100.0 %)	BONE	1'245 " 50	-21.0 " 1.1	AD 669 – 892

Interpretation of the C14 analysis.

Because the hilt of this keris is made out of three different organic materials and because all parts were sealed by a volcanic ash it is possible to determine the age by means of a physics research. Three different methods can be used. First off the C14 analysis for the three organic materials, the thermoluminescence for researching the volcanic ash and the geostatigraphy for the ash horizon of the volcano outburst. This way five, independent from each other, tests for the age can be done.

Two C14 analysis on the wood and the antler from the hilt are executed by the ETH in Zurich.

The wood was estimated at an age of 1090 $\pm$ 40 and the antler 1245 $\pm$ 50 year BP! The meaning of BP is Before Present and stands for BP = 1950.

After correction of the measured values it has been calculated that the hilt of the buda-keris was made before the year 1016 AD and that the tree was felled between 889 till 1016 AD and the deer was killed in the time between 669 AD and 892 AD. So the antler is older than the wood. If we assume that the wood and the antler were obtained some years after each other, the hilt would be made between 889 AD and 892 AD, so the end of the 9th, start of the 10th century.

Historically speaking this date falls in a, for Java, very dark period. Between 870 AD and 977 AD no Stone temples were built. In East Java found inscription dating from 1016 AD tells explicitly that the kingdom is burned to ashes and the king was killed. This could be a clue for a heavy volcanic outburst. During the reign of king Sindok 929 AD the centre of the political power (the seat of the government) moved from middle- to Kediri in East Java. In addition one should not forget that King Dharmawangsha 990 AD gave the order to attack the mighty Shrivijaya and lost not only the war but his life also. In this critical phase King Airlangga, as son of the sister of Dharmawangsha (1019 AD), seized the power and led his people back to unity and prosperity. From the historical point of view there are two catastrophic scenarios with volcanic outbursts possible within the time period that this Buda-keris must have come into being, 929 AD and 1016 AD. Because of the indirect dating of this keris it is possible to also do some metallurgical research on the iron of this keris, that can be used as reference.

Summary

It is an extraordinary lucky coincidence that this Buda-keris with its original hilt from organic material, in good shape and practically no damage by rust formation, was excavated. The

shape of the hilt and the blade strongly resemble the bronze daggers as they are known from temple sculptures and museums. The organic material from the hilt allowed us to determine the age by means of the C14 method. This way the first step for dating the Buda keris is set, in which this specimen is placed at the beginning of the 10th century. A surprise is the excellent forging technique of the keris Buda Voglsinger.

The C14 method confirms the on static grounds suspected origin of the keris.

The shape of the hilt cannot only be traced back to the bronze daggers but also has some kinship with European weapons from this time period. This type of dagger is called a rondell, named after the disc that closed the hilt.

With this it is also probably confirmed that the date engraved on the Knaud keris, is not the year of its making, but sooner a date that was engraved later to commemorate a special event.